

Afghanistan **Freedom** Watch

March 13, 2006

Com...ces Command - Afghanistan



Sharana PRT offers civic assistance

Page 8

We're not in Kansas anymore!

The 19th Public Affairs Detachment, from Fort Riley, Kansas, has assumed responsibility of the Freedom Watch from the Soldiers of the 20th PAD.

If you have a story idea, would like to submit stories and photos for publication or would like to offer feedback, please call the editor at 231-3338 or e-mail freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil.

Please keep in mind that all stories are subject to editing for length and content, and photos must be of high quality to be considered for publication.

As the 20th PAD heads home to Fort Wainwright, Alaska, the Soldiers of the 19th PAD will continue to provide the same level of service to Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan given during the past year.

The 19th PAD looks forward to telling the Operation Enduring Freedom story.



Contents

Page 3: Bush makes surprise visit to troops in Afghanistan

Page 4: Team manages incoming equipment, aids readiness

Page 5: Airmen explain role in support mission

Page 6: Bagram Airfield honors black history

Page 8: Sharana PRT visits orphanage, provides civic assistance ▶

Page 11: Task Force Falcon spreads wings, assumes aviation mission

Page 12: Catamounts assume command

Page 14: Around the Services

Page 15: Photo page: President visits Bagram ▶



Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

Freedom Watch is a weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry
Public Affairs Officer Col. James R. Yonts

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Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is 0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 415, Room 205, Bagram Airfield. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

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Click on the *Freedom Watch* link in the features section to view the *Freedom Watch*. To be added to the weekly distribution list, e-mail freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil

Bush makes surprise visit to Bagram, talks to troops

By Air Force Staff Sgt.

Marti Ribeiro

Combined Joint Task Force - 76

Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan

-- President George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush made a surprise visit here March 1 to remind troops that their mission in Afghanistan is as important as ever in the war on terrorism.

"You are fighting an enemy and bringing them to justice so they won't hurt our fellow citizens again. That mission requires steadfast determination," the president said.

He praised Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and Department of Defense civilians for standing up to serve their country after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"You saw our nation was attacked, and when your country called, you gladly served," he said. "This government will not blink; we will not yield. We are on the right course, and the world will be a better place because of your service. God bless you for protecting our country."

Bush met earlier with Afghan



Photo by Army Pfc. Brian Schroeder, Combined Joint Task Force - 76

President George W. Bush speaks to U.S. service members March 1 at Bagram Airfield. Bush told the service members their role in the war on terrorism is as important as ever and praised them for their determination.

President Hamid Karzai in Kabul.

He said Karzai was thankful for the military members who are protecting freedom and democracy in Afghanistan.

"He recognizes his country wants

democracy," Bush said. "We will be calling the Afghan government a democracy in the interest of their children and their grandchildren."

More photos, Page 15

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Afghan cultural tidbit

It's nice to meet you.

Dari

Az mulagat-ba shama khoosh hal hastam
(OZ moo-la-gat-bah sha-mash hoosh haul hash-dahm)

Pashtu

Da tasoo leedena sokha khoosh hal shooma
(Dah tah-soo lee-deh-nah si-kha hoosh haul shoo-mah)

Young Afghan girls often go bareheaded, but women cover their heads with long headscarves of varying colors. Color trends vary by region. The scarves are tied around their heads, leaving a long end hanging down their backs, which can be drawn across the face. School girls generally wear white headscarves.

Team manages incoming equipment, aids unit readiness



Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Rautio

**By Army Sgt. 1st Class
Michael Rautio**
*Joint Logistics Command
Public Affairs*

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- When a division deploys Soldiers and equipment, it is no small feat. With literally thousands of people and pieces of equipment to track, the entire process can resemble controlled chaos.

Here, Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul J. Armour, an electronics maintenance supervisor in the 10th Sustainment Brigade, has been tasked with managing all of the equipment coming into Afghanistan as the 10th Mountain Division begins its yearlong stint in the country.

But this task isn't something Armour can do alone. On any given day, he has a crew of roughly 10 Soldiers who do everything from guarding sensitive items to receiving and repairing vehicles as they arrive in country.

The various pieces of equipment arrive at all times of the day and by many different modes.

The division's sensitive items mainly arrive by air, Armour

said. Most of the division's other equipment is loaded onto a ship bound for Pakistan. Once in Pakistan, the equipment is loaded onto trucks for transit to Afghanistan.

When sensitive items arrive, they are moved from the airfield to a holding area. This holding area is guarded by Armour's Soldiers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The sensitive items stay there until unit representatives arrive and take control of them.

The biggest part of the mission for Armour and his people is dealing with vehicles as they arrive, he said.

Most vehicles need some sort of repair, Armour said. While many of the repairs are cosmetic, some repairs are critical.

Many of the vehicles arrive with flat tires, he said. This is because drivers let air out of the tires before they ship them. This lowers the center of gravity so the vehicles don't tip over, but it means that they have to be fixed before the vehicles can be picked up, Armour said.

Any unit that has equipment

See TEAM, Page 13

Army Spc. Ayambang Simaze directs Army Pvt. 1st Class Christopher Barber as he moves a fuel truck on Bagram Airfield. Both Soldiers are assigned to the 10th Sustainment Brigade.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Larry Shockley discusses plans with contractors on a project supporting the of Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan at the Afghan National Army Logistics Acquisition headquarters in Kabul. Shockley is a resident engineer for the Afghanistan Engineer District.

Photo by Eric Aubrey
Afghanistan Engineer District

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



Airmen explain role in support mission



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jennifer Redente

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason T. Nieves briefs Air Force Brig. Gen. Bruce E. Burda on the equipment joint terminal attack controllers use in the field to communicate with pilots and ground troops. Nieves is a 4th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron JTAC, and Burda is the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing and Air Component Coordination Element commander.

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Jennifer Redente
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Airmen of the 4th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron briefed the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing leaders here Saturday.

"The purpose of the briefing was to show what we bring to the fight," said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Eric Kibby, 4th EASOS superintendent. "We wanted to show how joint terminal attack controllers travel with the ground forces."

"JTACs maintain contact with the Air Support Operations Center to coordinate and brief pilots in CAS missions," said Air Force Capt. Kliff Mosley, of the 20th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron. "JTACs go out with Army units, and based off the ground commander's decisions, JTACs call in coordinates to supporting aircraft in order to neutralize enemy threats."

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason T. Nieves, a squadron JTAC, spearheaded the briefing for Air Force Brig. Gen. Bruce E. Burda, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing and Air Component Coordination Element commander. During the brief, he told the general about the mission and equipment

See AIRMEN, Page 10

Enduring Voices

What African-American has made the greatest impact on American society?



Army Spc. Douglas Comfort, 10th Mountain Division
"Martin Luther King Jr. Him leading the civil rights movement had a huge impact."



Edward Johnson, Kellogg, Brown and Root
"Colin Powell. I feel he has strong leadership abilities."



Army Sgt. Joy Mathis, 413th Adjutant General
"Martin Luther King Jr. His speeches changed our society."



Army Cpl. Garence Swims, 114th Field Artillery
"Martin Luther King Jr. He played a big part in the civil rights movement."



Air Force Senior Airman Michael Wardingley, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron
"Condoleezza Rice, our next president."

Bagram honors black history

Event focuses on youth, education, equal opportunity, progress

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Marti Ribeiro
Combined Joint Task Force - 76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines celebrated Black History Month here Feb. 24.

Department of Defense civilians and other members of the Coalition force also gathered with service members here to recognize black contributions and achievements.

The celebration included a slideshow, poem recitation, musical performance by a choir of service members and speech by guest speaker Army Maj. Cynthia Coleman, Aviation Brigade Adjutant for the 10th Mountain Division.

Coleman focused on this year's Black History Month theme of "Reaching Out to Youth: A Strategy for Excellence."

"Living by the Army values and the Soldier's Creed is a great



"To understand the history of America is to understand the diversity of America."

**Army Maj. Gen.
 Benjamin C. Freakley,
 Combined Joint Task Force - 76 commander**

way to reach out to our youth," Coleman said. "But, if we are to tell our children that the sky's the limit, then we need to live it."

She emphasized that education and hard work are the keys to

See HISTORY, Page 7



(Above) Army Maj. Cynthia Coleman speaks during the Black History Month celebration at Bagram Airfield on Feb. 24. Coleman, Aviation Brigade Adjutant for the 10th Mountain Division, was the guest speaker at the event.

(Left) Guests listen to the all-service member choir during the celebration.



Photo by Army Pfc. Brian Schroeder, Combined Joint Task Force -76

A choir of service members performs at the Black History Month celebration at Bagram Airfield on Feb. 24.

HISTORY, from Page 6

success, regardless of race.

Coleman also focused on the progress the United States, particularly the military, has made in civil rights and equality.

"I'm not going to tell you that I was denied a promotion because of skin color, and that's a good thing," she said. "It means we've come a long way."

Coleman said the military leads the way in equal opportunity.

"It fosters an environment that exists regardless of race, sex, religion or national origin," she said.

Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, Combined Joint Task Force - 76 commander, echoed the major's comments.

"Soon we'll have a history of America in which it won't be broken out by race. It will just be America," the general said. "To understand the history of America is to understand the diversity of America."

Boys at the orphanage, who just received Texas A&M clothes, show the upside down Longhorn sign.



Photos by Army Spc. Tiffany Evans

Sharana Provincial Recon visits orphanage, offers c



Army Lt. Col. Skip Jones hands a jacket to a small boy while giving out civic assistance at an orphanage. Jones is a physician assistant with the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Brigade.

By Army Spc. Tiffany Evans
20th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan -- Service members attached to the Sharana Provincial Reconstruction Team and the medical team at Forward Operating Base Sharana handed out clothing, blankets, firewood and food products at an orphanage here Feb. 18.

About 50 boys live at the orphanage, said Army Lt. Col. Skip Jones, a physician assistant with the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry Brigade. They all live in one small building, which is also the school, and they were in desperate need of civic assistance.

"I visit the orphanage often and wanted to do more for them," Jones said. "I got the chance

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Marine Cpl. Nathan Rebord sizes a shirt to a boy's back to ensure a good fit.

Construction Team Civic assistance

group of people in Bryan-College
Texas saw pictures of the kids in my
er and decided to send clothes to me
organized clothing drive that they threw
at the last minute."

Forsythe and the employees of Brazos
Physician Assistance held a clothing drive
ected more than 50 boxes of clothing
ones said. They worked with the ser-
major of the 420th Engineer Brigade in
Texas, to get the boxes shipped to Jones.
ers of the PRT and medical team decid-
d blankets, firewood and food products
othing, said Marine Cpl. Nathan Rebord
eployed from Marine Base Camp
N.C. Service members tried to make
-assistance mission a little more

personal.

"Instead of just throwing all the clothing and blankets in a pile and leaving, we had (groups of four at a time) come up to us," Rebord said. "Then we'd search for articles of clothing to fit each individual child, and we made sure each child had a jacket."

The children and the adults at the orphanage were excited and thankful, Rebord said. The Afghans kept thanking the service members and shaking their hands.

"It's important that we give civic assistance to the Afghans, because it helps us to gain their trust and respect," Jones said. "Once we gain their trust, it's easier to gain intelligence, they are more likely to turn in enemies of the Afghan government and the less they attack us."



Army Lt. Col. Michael Winkler grabs a T-shirt and checks to make sure it's the right size for one of the boys. Winkler is a PRT Engineer with the Missouri National Guard headquarters.

Chapel, aid station dedicated to fallen Soldiers

By Army Spc.
Tiffany Evans

**20th Public Affairs Detachment
FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA,
Afghanistan** -- Service members honored two fallen Soldiers by dedicating a chapel and aid station in their names here Feb. 10 and 11.

The FOB Sharana Chapel was renamed the Davis Memorial Chapel on Feb. 10 in honor of Army Sgt. Robert Davis, a driver assigned to the 864th Engineer Battalion (Heavy). Davis was killed when an improvised explosive device hit the vehicle he was

driving Aug. 18, said Army Sgt. Daniel McGarrah who is a medic and squad leader with Headquarters Support Company, 864th En. Bn.

McGarrah, who was one of Davis's best friends, said "He would've been embarrassed to have had it dedicated to him, but would have been honored that we thought of him with such respect."

The FOB Sharana aid station was renamed the Campbell Care Center on Feb. 11 in honor of Army Staff Sgt. Damion Campbell. Campbell was the senior medic for Headquarters and

"A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers."

President John F. Kennedy

Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Campbell was convoying to Khayr Kot Castle, in Paktika Province, when the vehicle he was riding in was hit by an IED on Aug. 26, said fellow medic Army Sgt. Justin Guizar.

Guizar, who is also with HHC, said, "It's fitting that the aid station be named after Sergeant Campbell because he always did his best to take care of the Soldiers. He'd be proud to have it named after him, and I think it's great because it's a place that can carry on his legacy of taking care of Soldiers."

Both Davis and Campbell spent a year in Iraq supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom before deploying to Afghanistan supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

"These men served their countries honorably and gave their lives in defense of freedom for another country," said Army Chaplain (Capt.) Douglas Gibson. "We have honored their memories with these dedications, and they will live on in our memories."

"A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers," said the chaplain, quoting President John F. Kennedy.



Photo by Army Spc. Tiffany Evans

Service members at Foward Operating Base Sharana gather for a dedication ceremony in honor of Staff Sgt. Damion Campbell. Campbell was the senior medic for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment here for two months before he was killed by an improvised explosive device.

AIRMEN, from Page 5

of JTACs. To do this, Nieves suited up to show what equipment a JTAC carries on a mission.

The equipment varies based on each mission, but the basics weigh about 80 pounds and include radios, a Global Positioning System receiver, ammunition, food, water and clothing. "As

members of the joint team, our JTACs have excelled across the battlefield, lugging incredible amounts of equipment and weapons across incredible terrain, to ensure we provide the right combat airpower on target as quickly as possible," Burda said.

"The JTACs and other battlefield Airmen have really done an outstanding

job here in Afghanistan," he said. "They endure all the same hardships and challenges on the ground that the Soldiers and Marines face. I am very proud of all of our Airmen who directly and indirectly support the fight; particularly these Airmen who help bring the full range of airpower to bear on the enemy."

Task Force Falcon spreads wings, assumes aviation mission

By Army Sgt. 1st Class

Doug Sample

Task Force Falcon Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Task Force Falcon Commander Col. Michael Rose assumed command of the Army's Operation Enduring Freedom aviation mission from Task Force Griffin Commander Col. Mark McKearn here on Feb. 17.

Although it's been two years since the incoming unit's 2004 redeployment to Fort Drum, N.Y., from here, for many it seemed like only yesterday when they stood on the same flightline to accept authority of the Army's aviation mission for OEF.

In assuming authority, Rose said the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade (Task Force Falcon) is eager for this latest mission and confident it can overcome the challenges ahead. He said the brigade "looks forward to playing our part on the Combined Joint Task Force - 76 team, as we continue to prosecute and succeed in the global war against terrorism."

During the ceremony, McKearn said Task Force Griffin leaves the OEF aviation to "no stranger." He also noted that his aviators gained invaluable experience themselves by logging more than 52,000 flight hours, conducting 3,500 missions and 740 medical evacuations during their yearlong deployment.

McKearn added that Task Force Falcon's first deployment here helped shape the environment for aviation in this theater, adding, "The 10th CAB will continue that great tradition of taking the fight to the enemy and making Afghanistan a more stable and secure environment."

Unfortunately for TF Griffin, that fight has not come without cost, McKearn said, as some of his troops made the ultimate sacrifice.

In 2005, TF Griffin lost 10 crewmembers and two helicopters. McKearn said his brigade will never forget those Soldiers and their families.

"Let their memories spur you to live and work in such a way as to make their sacrifice worthwhile," he said.



Photo by Army Sgt. Stephanie Pearson, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade

Task Force Falcon Commander Army Col. Michael Rose (left) and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Sturtevant unfurl the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade colors Feb. 17 at the transfer of authority ceremony on Bagram Airfield. Rose assumed responsibility of the Army's aviation in Afghanistan on behalf of the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, N.Y.

TF Falcon's mission is to conduct aviation operations to destroy the enemy and defeat terrorist threats. Ideally, this will allow the Afghan government to focus on training its national security force, Rose said. In addition, the task force will provide logistical and aviation support for Coalition forces throughout the country, conduct tactical maneuvers and security, and attack operations if needed.

Rose said that though the mission is much the same as last time, the current TF Falcon is much different than the one previously deployed.

Since 2004, the 10th CAB has been part of the Army's transformation plan

that has restructured the organization to enhance total combat power.

In addition, the number of Soldiers assigned to the unit has nearly doubled.

"Transformation allows the brigade to bring a much better capability in Afghanistan than the previous rotation," Rose said, "but we also bring the same esprit de corps that was the hallmark of the first rotation."

The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade began departing its wintry upstate New York home in January, after spending more than eight months preparing for the deployment.

The last troops arrived in country Feb. 12.

Catamounts assume command

By Army Capt.

Jeremy Secrest

*2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry
Regiment*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ANED, Afghanistan -- Task Force Catamount assumed command of Task Force Fury here Feb. 19.

Members of the incoming task force, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and the outgoing unit, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry Regiment, attended the transfer of authority ceremony.

As the battalion colors for TF Fury were cased and the battalion colors for TF Catamount were uncased, TF Catamount, headed by 2-87th infantrymen, assumed responsibility for the ongoing battle against terrorism in Paktika Province.

"The Catamounts will build on the efforts of TF Fury, who had remarkable success during their year in Afghanistan," said Army Maj. Steve Grabski, battalion operations officer and head of the Catamount advanced party.

After their return in April 2004 from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the Catamounts focused their efforts on transformation. The organization added a forward support company and a heavy weapons company while simultaneously executing an ambitious training program to prepare for their next deployment in the war on terrorism, Grabski said.

During the past year and a half, the 2-87th Inf. Soldiers have used more than 2.2 million rounds to develop marks-



Photo by Army Capt. Jeremy Secrest

Army Lt. Col. Chris Toner and Army Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Vega uncase the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment colors, signifying the transfer of authority from Task Force Fury to TF Catamount in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Toner is the Catamount commander and Vega is the battalion command sergeant major.

manship skills and confidence, sent Soldiers to Ranger School, hosted a Sniper School Mobile Training Team, conducted cultural training and language training in Pashtu, the local language of Paktika Province, and certified more than 400 Soldiers as Spartan First Responders to enhance medical aid capabilities, Grabski said.

The Soldiers began their year and a half of preparation by focusing on the basics: Physical readiness, marksmanship and battle drills, said Army Maj. Todd Lowell, the battalion executive officer. The battalion launched its training program with the "advance marksmanship density." This

included short-range marksmanship and long-distance marksmanship, and culminated in an individual Soldier maneuver "Combat Shoot."

The Soldiers then transitioned to unit maneuver live-fire exercises, progressing from buddy-team live-fire exercises through company combined-arms live-fire exercises.

The Catamounts rehearsed deployment activities twice. First, they headed to Camp Blanding, Fla., where they conducted a five-week training exercise. The unit practiced again by deploying to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., for a mobilization readiness exercise.

By successfully completing

those training exercises, the Catamounts demonstrated that they and their families were ready for the one-year OEF deployment, Lowell said.

On Jan. 21, key leaders deployed from Fort Drum, N.Y., to begin preparing for the deployment of the task force main body. When the main body began to deploy Jan. 31, the advanced party had established systems to receive the incoming infantrymen and begin the process of assuming responsibility, Grabski said.

"More than 1,000 Soldiers deployed during a one-week period.

Each Catamount took advantage of the opportunity to

See CAT, Page 13

TEAM, from Page 4

coming into the country goes through this yard, Armour said.

"We just want to make it as easy as possible for the unit to

get their equipment," he said.

"We save the units time they would otherwise have to spend performing maintenance," he added.

Another benefit of having a

set team is that it cuts down on people getting the wrong equipment. When everyone has to come through the same place to get their equipment it is much easier to keep track of

it and avoid problems with accountability, Armour said.

(Information from a Combined Forces-Afghanistan, Coalition Press Information Center press release was used in this story.)



Photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Rautio

Members of the 10th Sustainment Brigade Troops Battalion are responsible for guarding, managing and tracking equipment as it arrives in Afghanistan. The team also inspects equipment and performs needed maintenance.

CAT, from Page 12

interact with the unit he was replacing, get a feel for the area and prepare for future operations.

Key leaders participated in combat patrols conducted by TFFury units, and met provincial and village leaders in their area," Grabski said.

Units inspected and accounted for equipment

they were receiving from TF Fury and received the equipment they had shipped from Fort Drum.

Catamounts then began to conduct patrols, with key leaders from TF Fury participating to provide expertise. With the conclusion of the transfer of authority ceremony, the last of the TF Fury leaders passed the baton to

the Catamounts and prepared to depart Afghanistan for a well-earned return to their families, Lowell said.

After a year and a half of preparation, the Catamounts are focused on assisting Afghan government officials in helping the people of Paktika Province secure the gains they have achieved during the past few years, Lowell

said.

"We have great respect for the hardships that the Afghan people have borne for over a quarter of a century," said Army Lt. Col. Chris Toner, 2-87th battalion commander, during the ceremony. "The Catamounts stand ready to make great strides in the security and stability of Paktika Province."

Air National Guard unit tests rescue basket

By Air Force Master Sgt.
Orville F. Desjarlais Jr.

Air Force Print News

WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N.Y. --

An Air National Guard rescue unit successfully tested the world's first multiperson rescue basket, a cage-like device that, once certified, can carry up to 15 people.

"We really could have used this after hurricanes Katrina and Rita," said Air Force Lt. Col. Brad Sexton, a program manager in the Air National Guard-Air Force Reserve Command Test Center at Tucson, Ariz.

The colonel was one of the first to fly in the Heli-Basket, a 4-and-a-half foot by 8-and-a-half foot metal cage that hangs on a 125-foot cable below an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter.

After the three successful test flights, Sexton forwarded his findings to higher headquarters to start the certification process. He doesn't know when Air Force officials will deem the device safe enough for actual rescues.

The inventor, John Tollenaere, said it was the first time a rescue device like his has been tested for human use.

Since the Pave Hawk is a highly modified version of the Army Black Hawk helicopter, the Air Force accepted the Army's certification of the Heli-Basket for cargo use in June 2003.

Tollenaere said he invented it to stabilize helicopter loads, like plywood, which catch the wind like an airplane wing and become unstable during transport. He said it was a natural progression to try to certify the Heli-Basket to carry people.

"I've got a picture of a lot of helicopters flying around the MGM Grand Hotel (in Las Vegas, Nev.) when it was on fire," said Robert Massey, support contractor for the test center. That 1980 fire was the worst in Las Vegas history. It killed 84 people and injured hundreds more.

"Rescuers had to pick those people up from the roof one at a time," Massey said. "I also remember the images of Katrina victims getting lifted out one at a time. Using the Heli-Basket, the Air Force will be able to pick up entire families from rooftops and not be forced to separate families, which is what happened during Katrina."

Because rescuers came from diverse organizations -- military and nonmilitary



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Jack Braden

Soldiers are lifted to safety in a multiperson rescue basket during certification training at Westhampton Beach, N.Y., Feb. 28. Volunteers from the 106th Rescue Wing at Francis S. Gabreski Field, N.Y., tested the basket so it can be certified for use in rescuing people.

-- and they were based at different locations, they inadvertently separated family members plucked one at a time from rooftops.

Using a litter or a harness, pararescuemen normally only rescue one person at a time. In extreme circumstances, they can rescue two people if all three's combined weight is not more than 600 pounds. The Heli-Baskets can carry up to 8,800 pounds, or 15 people, which exceeds the Pave Hawk helicopter's maximum cargo weight of 8,000 pounds.

"It is going to make our jobs easier," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Bryan Walsh, a 101st Rescue Squadron pararescueman. "It'll be another tool in our tool box that will allow

us to evacuate more people at one time. It is very versatile. We'll be able to rescue people from swamps, fields, water and rooftops -- everywhere except jungles.

"Any tool that will help us save more lives is a great asset to us," the sergeant said.

The Pave Hawk's primary mission is to conduct day or night operations in hostile environments to recover downed aircrew during war. Because of its versatility, the military uses the helicopter in other-than-war operations. These tasks include civil search and rescue, emergency aeromedical evacuation, disaster relief, international aid, counterdrug activities and NASA space shuttle support.



Photo by Army Pfc. Brian Schroeder, Combined Joint Task Force - 76

President George W. Bush, first lady Laura Bush and Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan commander, talk with troops at Bagram Airfield on March 1. Bush encouraged troops and praised the progress of the Afghan government.



Bush poses for photos with service members March 1.



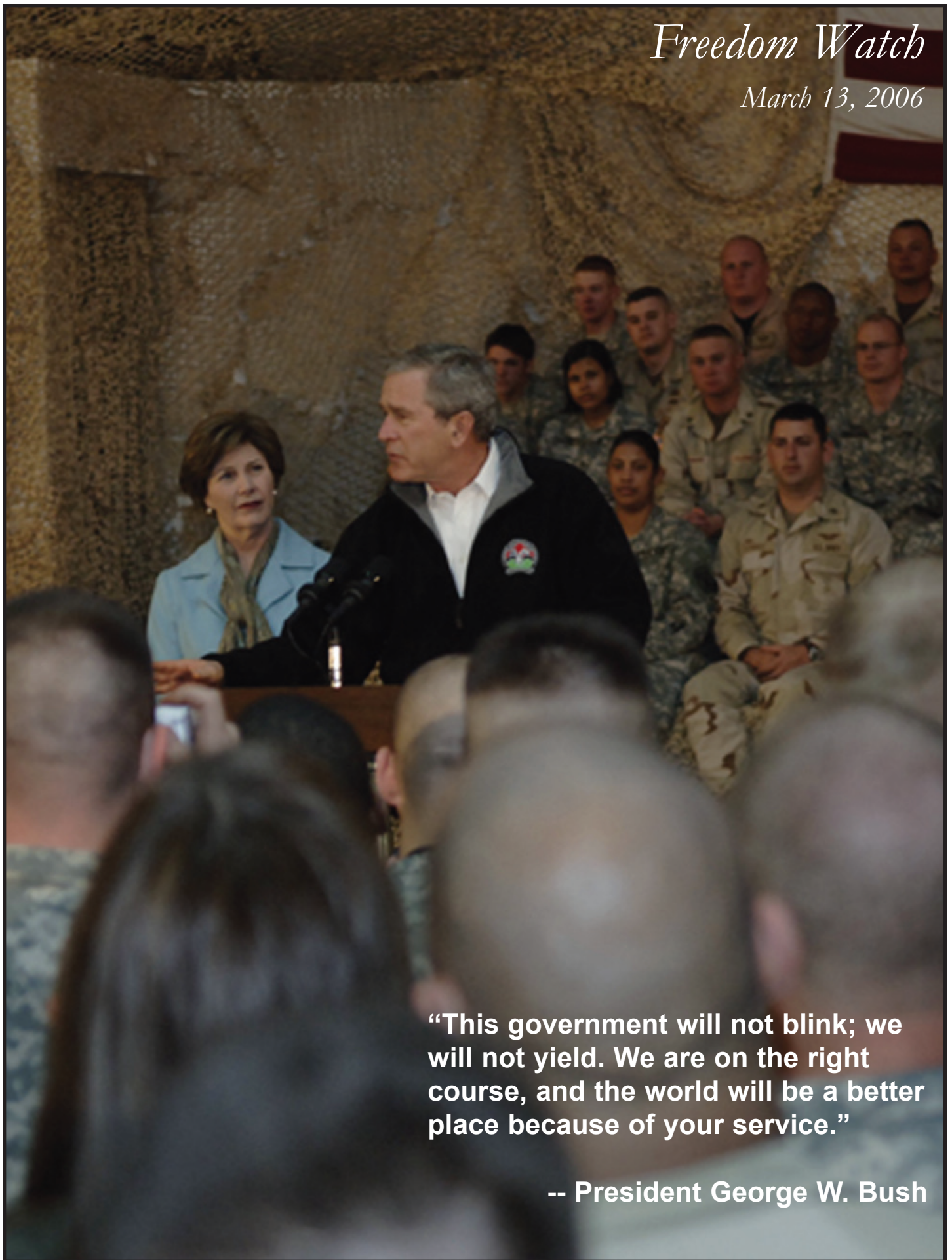
Above: U.S. and Coalition forces clamor to get photos of Bush during his surprise visit to Bagram Airfield on March 1.

Left: Bush shakes hands with Army Sgt. Derek Kessler. Kessler is assigned to the 10th Mountain Division.

Photo by Army Spc. Christopher S. Barnhart, 55th Combat Camera

Freedom Watch

March 13, 2006



“This government will not blink; we will not yield. We are on the right course, and the world will be a better place because of your service.”

-- President George W. Bush